

# A Public Nuisance

TALES OF ADVENTURE & A SPIRIT OF REVOLT  
GLASGOW ANARCHISTS 1974 TO 1986

*Jim McFarlane*

A LIBERTARIAN SOCIALIST Group forms at Strathclyde University, reproducing an expanded version of *Solidarity's As We See It* as a founding statement; an ad appears in the last issue of the 'Glasgow News' about an Anarchist group participating in squatting in the Glasgow University campus; a prominent NUSS activist gets involved in the Anarchist Workers Association. Contact made between individuals leads to a Group being formed and the 'withering away' of former pursuits such as candle-making in favour of class struggle politics. A primitive duplicator churns out first leaflet on Binmen's dispute. Formation of the Glasgow Union of Squatters and attempts made to make contact with individual squatters in Maryhill, Govanhill & elsewhere. Anarchist centre set up in Bute Gardens in large squat with 9 rooms, a large public room equipped with duplicator, silkscreen (donated by Art Lecturer) & space for 20-30 bodies. Skirmishes with University officials when door repainted a defiant Red but this

Autumn 1974

Libertarian socialist network

Investigative paper early '70s

National Union School Students

National Organisation modelled on  
International Socialists (Platformists)

Mid 1975

abates when bottles owned by Dept of Urology are released, without more samples being added! Another squat exists with less 'political' elements (interview appears in the 'Daily News') but another, vacated by trotskyite Lecturer is closed down by the authorities.

By way of bookstalls, leafleting demonstrations & Public Meetings the nucleus of the GAG makes contact with other anarchists. Some of the Public Meetings were notable: the late John Olday (veteran anti-militarist & revolutionary who tried to assassinate Hitler) spoke on 'German Anarchism' which he equated with armed struggle groups, & cooked us a meal at the Social afterwards; also in Partick we had a talk & filmshow about the Kirkby Rent Strike on the outskirts of Liverpool, which was supported by 'Big Flame'; a Debate on the Spanish Revolution included the participation of the late Miguel Garcia & Albert Meltzer but ascendancy over the International Marxist Group was only achieved by speakers from the floor, veterans of groups in the 1960s.

By then a federation, the SLE, not to be confused with the punk 'New wave', was established in 6 Scottish Centres. In Aberdeen a breakaway from the Socialist Party of Great Britain had formed an effective direct action group with individual anarchists; in Dundee spasmodic activity by the group lacked cohesion; in St. Andrews there was a brief student group fronted by somebody called 'Haggis'; in Stirling the Local Council took fright & cancelled the inaugural Anarchist meeting but a group was formed, largely student based with an Anarchist Collection established at the University Library; in Edinburgh there were close ties with Glasgow & joint campaign work, the nucleus being members of AWA. A series of 7 Conferences were held between the beginning of 1975 & end of 1977, three of which were in Glasgow. The formal sessions, like the interminable Internal Newsletters that were intended to sustain the momentum of the network in between conferences & joint campaigns, deserve

1975/76

Stephano from Italy & Alain from France active in G.A.G. - deserters from military service.

Revolutionary socialist group then more libertarian

London Anarchist Black Cross

Scottish Libertarian Federation

SLEF. Newsletters commence, I write 'Towards a philosophy of anarchist praxis' (later reprinted in 'Freedom')

Anarchist alternatives against authority, electro-stenciled magazine, produced at Bute Gardens. 'Theoretical'. Clydeside paper produces two issues under anarchist control - later 'taken over' by Scottish republicans.

John Watson Collection

**WHY YOU  
SHOULD BE AN  
ANARCHIST**





scant memory. The after conference spirit was usually much more interesting & intoxicating. In Edinburgh the SLF Conference was interrupted by a marching Orange procession below & some comrades had to be dissuaded from uttering challenges: in Aberdeen the Glasgow group were confronted with the ideology of Anti-Sexism by a Dundee Libertarian who persuaded them to refrain from uttering expletives like 'Fuck' & to say 'Sneeze' instead.

More practical was immersion in International Solidarity work. This included solidarity with the hanged Salvador Puig in Spain, Ralf Stein in Cologne, the 'accidental death of' Pinelli in Italy framed by the State, Akatasuna in the Basque country, and the 1976 uprising in South Africa. Closer to home was the case of Noel & Marie Murray in Dublin who were facing the Death Penalty for allegedly killing a Garda (policeman). This led to support activities including the Picket at the Anglo-Irish Bank in Jamaica St & the occupation of Aer Lingus in St. Enoch Square, a successful exercise aided by a squad from Easterhouse linked to 'Clydesider' & Scottish Republicanism. Such protests were widespread in the British Isles, and abated with the commuting of the sentence. A feature of such activity was the generation of a moral righteousness & selfless exterior which, being flawed human beings, we couldn't sustain long.

A real progression was the move into 'community' issues, including the struggle to save Partick Bus Garage in 1977. More influential was the Fair Fares campaign which saw the group in 1976 launch a widespread poster campaign to popularise resistance to fares increases. Silkscreened 'Snoopy says No' purple posters appeared on bus shelters all over the city, especially by the nightshift of flyposterers who jumped in and out of vans on drives from Drumchapel to Easterhouse. Others scaled bridges and painted slogans, and the 'catalyst' efforts led to community groups linking in protests (and SNP gains from Labour in the peripheral estates). A few 'situations' were cre-

SLF newsletters became 'Scottish Libertarian' duplicated journal for 2 issues incl. reprint of Tom Woolley 'Containment & Liberation'

Glasgow libertarian socialist returns from Portuguese revolt 1976  
Reports of direct action in Scotland & Murray's support activity appear in 'Black Flag' & 'Anarchist Worker'.  
William Burroughs fan publishes 'Pocket Sedition: Journal of the Emergency Sanitation Dept.' Nice title, pity about comic contents.



1976-77

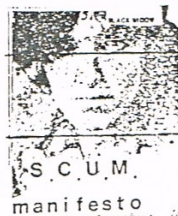
March 77 - one trial issue of 'Marilyn Offshoots' - duplicated rant.  
Rules governing marchers' leaflets distributed at May Day marches ('The Day the Dead Walk').  
Stewards go mental.

Propaganda of the Dead

ated on buses on a proclaimed 'Day of Action' & mysteriously a confrontation with transport police who happened to be on a 43 bus into town which a squad of Fares Fighters had boarded, refusing to pay the new fare & engaged in persuading passengers to join in the spirit.

The Glasgow Peoples Press was launched in September 1977. We had teamed up with a Possilpark based graphic artist/amateur journalist who had produced a 'pilot edition' called 'The Source'. His appeal for support was joined by a dozen anarchists and we worked together on several issues before he bailed out. The paper, with an initial print-run of 2,000, was modelled on a fusion of a radical community investigative paper integrated with an anarchic spirit of fostering revolt. Inevitably the blend was patchy and the project witnessed a steady drop in editorial collective participation & print run, dropping to less than a thousand. On the plus side 11 issues were produced & the G.P.P. provided a training ground in producing propaganda for popular consumption and spread knowledge of local community issues, campaigns on fares and setting up claimants unions, and awareness of projects such as the Alternative Bookshop Collective & libertarian publications.

The spread of the Claimants Union Movement initially was due to anarchist influence centred in Drumchapel, Partick & Maryhill. The anarchists also made links with the Firemen during their winter 1977/78 dispute. Support for local activists in Possilpark, Blackhill & Castlemilk led to the establishment of Unions with more entrenched credibility. Other unions in Rutherglen, Govanhill, Garthamlock & Paisley were formed, usually with a nucleus of 6 to 10 activists. A bond of mutual aid and distrust of the local State originally pervaded at the monthly coordination meetings. Yet within a year forces had combined to weaken the libertarian socialist element - apart from Castlemilk - and establish the Clydeside C.U.s as predominantly parochial, and seduced by a welfare rights mentality. A contributory factor in this process was





the policy of Community Development Officers assigned to the Social Work Department to award Start Up Grants & second Community Workers whose remit was to institutionalise the service of the local Union, allocate community flats & so. The squabbles with a handful of IMG activists also diverted attention from the emerging 'non-political' hegemony of welfarism, disregarding the socialist & more confrontational model of the C.U.s in England - in London organised on a borough-wide basis. The Region also set up at network of Welfare Rights Officers & other posts linked to Urban Aid projects & (after years of self-imposed austerity) many of the 'Westenders' were sucked into jobs as 'insiders'. Activity in the C.U. movement was part-and-parcel of a 'revolution of Everyday Life' approach which recognised a need to be involved in 'bread & butter' issues and negated identity as Anarchists.

In 1979 the General Election produced a Thatcherite victory, largely courtesy of exploiting the fallout of from the 'Winter of Discontent' & the vacillation of Callaghan in 'going to the country'. It also saw the end Teddy Taylor's fiefdom in Cathcart. And it was in the 'sleeping giant' of Castlemilk that the anarchists concentrated a local campaign to 'Put Rubbish in its Place', intended as a spoof of the District Council 'clean up' campaign redefined by the anarchists as politicians being consigned to the 'rubbish bin of history'. The joke was well intended but the campaign imploded as Maxton mobilised the highest Labour turnout in the seat, despite an inert & corrupt local party. A similar effect occurred two years later in the Hillhead by-election which ushered in the claret era of Roy Jenkins. Anarchists flirted with anti-parliamentary street meetings & propaganda which included a speaker exhorting the crowd to trash a Rolls-Royce stuck in a Byres Road traffic jam & a verbal assault of Pastor Jack Glass's cavalcade. Unlike the earlier era which drew from the everyday interaction engendered by living in squats and the solidarity of

1978/79

Claimants activists (excl. 2 Tross on the left) at Supp Benefits Commission Seminar chaired by David Donson, 1979  
Brisach Dubh pamphlets published from Port Glasgow: 'Anarchism & National Liberation Struggles', 'Crisis of Syndicalist Methods', 'Workers Autonomy', 'Angry Brigade Documents'. Later moved to London, printed in Sicily.  
3 issues of rotated 'Solidarity for Social Revolution' magazine produced in Scotland, no. 9 exclusively in Glasgow



1979/80

Hammer & Tongs, Workers Newsheet distributed within Scott-Lingows shipyard  
Motor bulletin about Chrysler sells 6 at Linwood  
SWP members retrieve posted copy from bin.  
Some cadres produce one-off duplicated 'Workers Councilist' broadsheet, leaving party en route to Arran.  
Jack Thompson newsheets produced by Paisley College students  
Festive anarchists play Chou Parhot at football A.C.A. conference in Hillhead, avoids sectarian punch-up in Arlington bar  
Anarchists help produce 'Castlemilk Today' & Postal Post community newspapers, both attacked by local Labour reactionaries.  
Collective producing 2 issues of 'Hard Times' insert in Bread & Roses (ACA), produce reprint issue of Bread & Roses from Castlemilk under collective title 'Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists'.  
Big print paper produces 12 issues. Aberdeen Community struggle views

claimants in regular contact, the activity in this period lacked a sense of purpose & belief. Episodes nevertheless occurred including public meetings in Scotland addressed by John Quail & a debate on Libertarian Education; the launch of 'Hard Times' as a Glasgow insert in the Anarchist Communist Association paper 'Bread & Roses'; anti-militarist leaflets by Rendevous' & other efforts at radicalising CND from the outside; solidarity with the Polish workers faced with the military clampdown of Dec '81 in a march to the Polish Consulate; the one-off appearance of the Izel Liberation Front; anti-nuclear action at Torness; and the fracas at Virgin Records which led to two arrests after the Megastore had being invaded by anarchists declaring 'all the records are free!'

The last mentioned event, and the possibly misguided intervention of masked anarchists in the huge Unemployment march in 1981, nevertheless ushered in a new era & the birth of the Clydeside Anarchists as a fighting force. The momentum started in Paisley in 1980 with the punk-inclined *Practical Anarchy* fanzine accompanying Groucho Marx Records promoting local bands such as the Fegs & XS Discharge. This led to the widespread circulation of a local broadsheet *Paisley Gutterpress* which achieved a notoriety through lampooning politicians and revealing scandals in the corridors of the Local Council. 'Practical Anarchy' then went on to its second reincarnation as a Group magazine, only 1 of the 2 issues being distributed. The inspiration from England of the 1981 riots became an underlying factor & the perceived need to combat the 'politics of despair' & rituals that personified the Left transfixed with the decisive ending of consensus politics. A new influx of lively characters formerly involved in punk, CND or trotskyite circles revitalised the approach. Facilitating this was the use of the Glasgow Bookshop Collective's basement in Great Western Road, where a printing press was located & meetings could be held to plan activity. The Bookshop Collective had been set up

1980/81

Anti-authority leaflet distributed at Anti-Nazi League rally at Edinburgh  
'Smash Hip Capitalism', follow up to fines levied against 'Virgin 2' fiasco  
Benefit concert in Paisley College disrupted by punk bands unwilling to surrender stage to 'Chou Parhot'  
Experimental anarchist 'Brains Trust' meeting, City Halls  
Practical Anarchy Xmas Special promotes do-it-yourself subversion kits

13. wearing Benn &amp; Foot face masks

1982/83

Internal Clydeside anarchist newsletters circulated to link dispersed group and encourage local projects  
Scottish tour by anarcho-feminists from Outta Control' paper in Belfast  
'Get the monkeys off our backs' leaflet distributed against professionalising (jobs for the boys) at Paisley unemployed workers centre  
Libertarian Voice produced from Piton, Edinburgh  
Antelope Gazette, hand-written fanzine from Paisley bubble  
Black Cat & 'Not the Cooner' fanzines produced by Dundee anarchists  
Free Winged Eagle magazine produced by anarchists in Orkney, linked to Black Flag  
Anarchist Window Pane, veteran syndicalist produces broadsheet from Galowegze  
Subversive Graffiti newsheet distributed in Aberdeen regularly  
Spool leaflet distributed as joint appeal by parties warning of anti-parliamentary views, Hillhead by-election  
Reprint of 'The Bourgeois Role of Bolshevism', Councilist text on Russian Revolution distributed by GPP pamphlet, 1982  
End of Music produced by Calderwood 15 Collective, 1982



with the participation of anarchists & fellow-travellers in feminist & other circles and managed to combine a base for promoting anti-authoritarian activities with the voluntary based selling of alternative literature.

In April 1982, *Practical Anarchy* was relaunched as a broadsheet & its notoriety was immediately achieved by the coincidence of the Falklands War. 'Fuck the Falklands' declared the tabloid-style front-page & to underline the tension at the targetted CND demonstration a dozen anarchists were arrested as the local constabulary desperately tried to impound the offending challenge to militarism. Issues followed at more or less monthly intervals, and although circulation rarely exceeded 4,000 an issue, there was a generally well received response at CND demonstrations & the like, excepting the Stewards & the straight Left who were wrong-footed by the audacious & lampooning approach. Apart from the broadsheets, which came to predominate up to mid-1984, flyers were produced, ideal for flyposting, announcing 'This Man is a Rat' (Wm Gray, ex-Provost); 'Anarchist Alternatives to Suicide' after two unemployed youths topped themselves in Warrington; an 'expose' on an underground shelter in the Burrell Collection vaults (!); an anti-parasite warning on the occasion of Pr Charles' wedding; and odd creations such as the 'Passport' leaflet during the Falklands War, the giro leaflet paid to A. Doler of Nowhere Place, and the Songs for Swinging Scroungers at the Picket of the CBI Conference in 1984.

The group was organised on fluid principles but inevitably this led to its perceived domination by able individuals & the beginning of a momentum to reorganise the 'Clydeside Anarchists' by 1984. The previous year, the public persona of the group had expanded with a series of Public Meetings held in Clydebank, Paisley, East Kilbride & Shawlands following on from a large rally (a disaster) at the McLellan Galleries shortly after the June 1983 Thatcher 'second term' victory. Thereafter one of the most

Autonomy Press print Farouhar McLeay's Art & Anarchism' & Education: Towards an Anarchist Approach' pamphlets. 1982

12,000 in August 1982 with 'Phew what a Sizzler' with Atomic Bomb Blast pic.

Regular contact with Fialine Peace Camp

Practical Anarchy distributed simultaneously at 3 shipyards in Glasgow/Clydebank, one response! Anarchist Youth Movement briefly active among young punks in Clydeside with links in Dunfermline & Edinburgh. 1983/1984

as a Tyranny of Structurelessness

positive developments took place with the 'free speech fight'; to establish a weekly pitch for Street Speaking in Argyle Street fronted by a pool of 4 varied speakers using contrasting styles to 'capture' an audience, briefly 'freed' from the routine of shopping (or shoplifting). There was also the production of local anarchist broadsheets - Toejam in Kilmarnock, West End Crimes in Hillhead/Maryhill, Refuse Collection in East Kilbride & Springburn Follies, produced by a couple of people in each locality and federated to the wider group, who often covered printing costs. Carried along by frenetic activity and the suspicion that our influence was more superficial and merely antidotal to the 'serious' Left, there developed a move to re-establish the group as an Organisation, to which activity would be more accountable & coordinated by an agreed strategy. To this end, a discussion journal *The Clydebank Anarchist* produced two issues in 1984. This was cast aside by the momentous development of the Miners Strike.

Not fully appreciating the significance of the miners' resolve to 'take on' the Government, the anarchists originally produced a couple of *Practical Anarchy* specials. As the dispute became more determined, with the deployment of centrally coordinated Policing, control over movement & so on, the mood of the Clydebank Anarchists changed, and the playful spirit was discarded. The mentality of self-sacrifice became enshrined in the Price-Waterhouse occupation and in the ensuing intense street-collections (6 times a week) which raised £12,000 which was passed in direct to Strike Centres, especially those in Ayrshire. Links with Union activists from Ayrshire were briefly formed, but in the process the Street-speaking pitches & the opening up of a public sphere for anarchist ideas was abandoned in favour of a role as a unofficial miners support group. Inevitably such activity & the delayed trial of the Price Waterhouse defendants exhausted those involved intensively, while those unable to match such commitment dropped by the wayside, often afflicted by

The Anarchists of the Precinct declare battle with the Imaginakers



Anarchist Burns Night held in Gurrett Theatre. D.I.Y. acts. January 1984  
Black Balm broadsheet distributed in Falkirk & Grangemouth  
After the 'Unemployed Diners Club' disrupt normal service in the Holiday Inn, 1984  
1984/86

Sequestrators of Union Funds

Counter Information broadsheet started September 1984 from Edinburgh/Glasgow



a sense of guilt that they had not 'done enough'. An impetus to this mood was provided by the growing influence of Animal Rights activity alongside anarchism & its stress upon indignation & anti-intellectualism.

Although spasmodic activities organised around 'Clydesider' broadsheet occurred in 1986, heralding the new Sherriff Court, & a visit by a Wapping militant trying to open up a 'second front' at the News International Plant in Kinning Park, another cycle of popular anarchist organising had dissipated with a negligible legacy.

Reflecting on such activity over the years, which achieved a greater impact in the 1982-4 period than previous anarchist projects, it is often difficult to analyse, by adopting the standpoint of a detached 'outsider', why certain activities occurred at certain times & why cycles of activity took place without apparent direct influence of historic events (excluding the observations about the miners' dispute). The question of praxis, the fusion of theory and practical activity, interested few militants over the years. The inability of the theorists to express themselves in clear, concise ways led to their ridicule, or at least marginalised influence, which they could only redeem by a bout of militantism. Similarly, as J. T. Caldwell has remarked, anarchist groups tend to attract a 'rank-and-file' member with an outlook pre-disposed to ideological certainties, an 'idée fixe' which sees theory in terms of historical dogma, a heritage enshrined on tablets of stone. Invariably many of the prime movers in successive groups, myself included, do not subscribe to such a approach, but our 'practical reflexivity' is rarely communicated with a relish & clear-sightedness that dovetails with the collective imagination of a political project which measures its impact in terms 'bearing witness'. As an interesting tangent to this it is instructive to note the marginal involvement (in Glasgow, especially when compared to Edinburgh) of women in the myriad of activities. In 1975 there was a joint

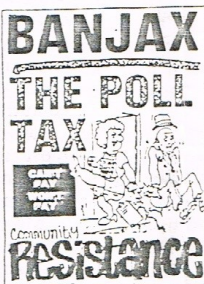
Here & Now Theoretical magazine, founded December 1984. First issue February 1985. post-situationist content.

One pilot issue of 'Scorcher' broadsheet distributed, & anti-Social Work poster: '...paid to grass...'

probably since the 1942/5 Anarchist Federation group

Central Scotland Collective carry on producing Counter Information after end of Miners Strike, 10,000 circulation by 1987/88

Biographer of Guy Aldred, including 'The Red Evangel'



discussion meeting of the GAG with the Womens Liberation Movement & in 1983 a brief anarcho-feminist discussion circle, an offshoot from the Bookshop collective & anarchist group. The Glasgow tradition is of workerism fused with Stirnerism, and the cultural transfer of such an approach over the past 50 years, helps explain the peripheral concern with 'new social movements' around cultural & gender concerns. Glasgow has a more enduring working class culture than most other UK cities & one interesting result of the Thatcherite authoritarian strategy in the coming years will be to undermine the hold of Labourism, the Welfare State & the electoral basis of 'dependency' politics.

NOTE: Inevitably activities & influences have been missed by this survey of anti-politics. To view leaflets & the mass of material received in 'mutual exchange' in UK and & overseas, visit the Mitchell Library, second floor, Social Science & ask to see the Anarchist reference Collection. See also the article by Robert Lynn in *Workers City*, Clydeside Press, 1988. For obvious reasons, names & certain direct actions have been omitted from mention.

**AK Distribution**  
**3 Balmoral Place**  
**Stirling**  
**Scotland**  
**FK8 2RD**

PHILOSOPHY

ANARCHISM

FEMINISM

SITUATIONISM



# The Absolute Game

THE POLITICS OF ORGANISING

*Ewan Davidson*

I AM 25 YEARS OLD and unemployed. For three years I have been involved with a series of radical groups in Edinburgh, starting with a Miners Support Group during the latter stages of the 1984/5 strike. Since then I have been involved with claimants groups, welfare rights campaigns, the anti-apartheid movement, support for various industrial struggles (pickets, collections, etc.) and the nurture group of a housing co-op for the young unemployed. I am currently secretary of a Claimants' Union. As a cross-section these have some important common characteristics. They have been alliances of groups with political differences, yet directed towards a particular goal. Developing without full-time organisers, each has been on a local (ie. single group) rather than a national level. I have become frustrated in most of them and if I have withdrawn, felt guilty. It is a common reaction. The observations which follow are drawn from experience in such groups.

Most radical campaigns fail. Almost all I have been involved in failed to reach their goals, or to attract support from their intended audience. In each case the development of the campaign has followed a regression of fewer and fewer members, and ever-increasing self-exploitation. The frustration and doubts which follow are serious. Speaking about shrinkage in the women's movement, Cath Levine concluded that 'we find we do not know what we are doing and for whose benefit, and we hate ourselves as much as before the move-

ment'.<sup>1</sup> The radical imagination is totally upended by the experience of radicalism.

And yet, outside such movements I feel guilty. This guilt has two causes. First, thought and action need each other: useful critical thinking can only take place in a context of broad practical activity. Second, I have seen in left groups more often than elsewhere what have been called 'prefigurative forms' – practices and attitudes which suggest what a different (better) world might look like. These instances arise from the combination of searching minds with practical tasks. They are rare but compelling and 'flash up at moments of danger'.<sup>2</sup> In the interim they provide, quite simply, hope.

Much of the problem for a radical group is the confusion and resulting disillusionment which develops from the difference between radical thinking and radical activity. Different qualities seem to be required. Mundane and repetitive struggle versus invigorating and antithetical thought. The key to combining these must be in the contemplation of the group dynamic, of how groups organise.

Say what you think, but I just get bored. . .

A revolutionary project cannot expect to be supported by public money. It may be possible to subvert or self-finance up to a point, but ultimately the coercion of wages will not be available to a project which does not have a cash return. Thus the revolutionary (professional or otherwise) depends on voluntary labour, on an accommodation between the needs and commitments of the person in the wider world, and the satisfaction they gain from the project. Dependent on this will be the amount of time and energy they can give the project. Issues such as wounded pride from criticism, incompetence, unwillingness to take responsibility are not of any importance to revolutionary theories such as Leninism, which assume members are principally responsible to the aims of the project. However, dealing sensitively (or sometimes failing to deal) with such problems is vital to the practice of current left groups. A volunteer's ties to a project form a commitment to its aims and possibilities, and empathy with its members. These rather nebulous notions are all you have; there are no possibilities of disciplining, no guarantees of continuing attendance or accepted authority and admonishment.

How are members to spend the time and energy they can donate most usefully? Left theorists (the recorders of the experience of our movement) consistently neglect these questions. As a result each time a project starts, we begin as innocents.

Most groups are structured so that the main entry point is the business meeting. This meeting is designed to distribute labour – the real assessment of the group can only take place by joining in this labour.



If you don't take part you can attend more meetings, but not really participate. The meetings will remain cryptic.

The process of initiation therefore moves from business meeting, to labour, to tactical discussion. You are now a member, you have a role. However you will not yet have been able to answer your initial question 'Does this group do what I want to do?' There is really no point at which you can make this decision – the group does not usually have written policies, and even where it has they are not usually relevant to its mundane, practical activity. What it does have are precedents and preferences. These may be as much subject to your influence as to anyone else's. There is no real way to determine how far the group will move except to try it.

You will arrive to find activities in progress – the group in motion towards its (and your) ultimate aim. The group has a greater potential for change than you do alone. It also is a sympathetic context for your work – it has a need for your efforts, but a gratitude for them also. In actions you will build up loyalties to people, in the social events which surround the activities you will make friends who understand your frustrations and your attempts to do something about them. Your work is positive, directed and supported. In the now-clichéd jargon of left movements, we have 'solidarity'. It is the great moment of the radical group: the moment of the iniquitous present becoming the possible future. It is in the light of this moment that the activist becomes explicable. Without understanding it (rather than naming it) they become incomprehensible – heroic, sinister or absurd.

Yet the business meeting does not encourage such moments. Why? Business meetings are not designed around new members. A newcomer's willingness to labour is dependent on how much of an outsider they feel. Lothian Claimants Union has had around 60 members and friends attending its meetings. However less than a third of these have participated in activity or attended further meetings.

They are structures for information exchange and have an undemocratic, if effective format for making policies. They are no good at all for orientation. The format also creates problems for the group through its emphasis on dispute. The creative aspects of the radical movement are subsumed by the form of the meeting which privileges calculation, theory and rhetoric.

In a radical group, this can be incredibly destructive. We tend to rely on implicit agreement to arrive at decisions through discussion. If a discussion is of a serious nature it may take up a whole meeting and the surrounding social activity. The group is paralysed. Suspicions of tactical and rhetorical manipulation develop. The tendency therefore is to hurry towards a decision. The 'normal' business methods for resolving disputes – formal procedures, guillotines, votes, authoritarian chairs – are generally considered unacceptable for reasons of

democracy. The implicit understanding is that the loyalties of our members will not survive these measures. What then develops in the group is a culture of dissonance, where the group polarises around the split of the initial argument. Differences between allies on other matters come to be seen as less important. Factions develop. Loyalty is relocated to the faction, while the sense of belonging to the group (and it belonging to you) diminishes. With the feeling that it is not your group anymore, there is not the same moral imperative to support its activities. Instead the developing factions receive the energy and support of their members. The chance of united action becomes more limited, and the group is effectively split. Such impasses arise because, believing how necessary it is that libertarian principles and businesslike conduct should combine, we just *hope* they do and act *as if* they do, rather than examining *how* they do.

But what alternative do we have? The best I have countered is the notion of 'work-time' to replace the meeting – a period when activity for the group takes place, with all members present. A chance for contact, training or discussion – and also a much more accurate representation of what the group does while allowing active participation from the new member, and spreading the skills of the group through participation in necessary activity. The cost of such an idea is of course the destruction of an effective 'decision making' centre. However by looking at the meeting from the perspective of group dynamics it is possible to question how 'effective' the meeting is. Decisions are made and tasks are delegated, but the meeting is for most people a thoroughly alienating form. It is literally formal. Therefore skills in 'meeting' are as important to delivering an opinion as the opinion itself. The infinite possibilities of the group lead instead to its manipulation by the experienced, the devious and the rhetorical. In other words those who already have strong views on particular possibilities, who have developed a separate agenda outside the group – those who are there not to discuss, create or learn, but to implement. To resist such developments you will have to develop similar skills. Those who do not are disadvantaged – as a result their opinions do not reach the agenda, and are not developed by the group. Without full participation the meeting conducts itself as ritual. Without another way of coming together, group members are rapidly disillusioned and disperse, leaving the rump of initiative to squabble fruitlessly among themselves. Ultimately, given that this sort of scenario develops, even if we are tightly organised and efficient we will be able to do less.

Work time devolves power from the business meeting to its participants. It emphasises different skills, and is essentially based on the positive qualities I discussed above. It allows the group members greater understanding and participation in the problems of the group, although at the cost of a certain extra amount of time required to com-



plete tasks. But if we agree that more effective participation is the key to our struggles then it is a necessary cost.

In groups I have been involved in there has been debate as to whether the group is divided within itself. Does it have a hierarchy, a group of elders or a tradition? This discussion has tactical implication. If we accept that a core group exists with greater experience and carrying greater responsibility, who are more reliable guides to 'what is to be done', what are the possibilities for autonomous action or innovation by other members? If we do not recognise such precedents how do we decide who to listen to? The two poles in this discussion are represented by the 'unstructured' group (typically with an anarchist or libertarian orientation) and the 'democratic centralism' of the Leninist party. Both are theories abstracted from dilemmas about autonomy and control regularly faced by radical groups.<sup>3</sup> They answer questions about how much freedom the individual has in representing the group and about what it is the group itself represents.

In June 1987 a Civil Servants strike forced the Unemployment Benefit Offices and DHSSs in Scotland to close. As on a previous occasion, our local Unemployed Centre decided that it should distribute food vouchers to those seriously affected by the strike. We approached the Social Work Department for these vouchers and were knocked back and delayed throughout the period leading up to the strike. On the day the strike began an occupation of the Regional Chambers took place supported by the Claimants Union and users of the Centre. Vouchers were promised and duly arrived. The next day there were again delays – there were also large queues of hungry people looking for vouchers. Another occupation took place supported by a Claimants Union activist. Most of the other members of the Union knew nothing of the occupation until after it had taken place although several were present in the building at the time it was arranged. The occupation was unsuccessful – the vouchers had arrived at the Centre in the interim period – and the demonstrators were evicted from the Chambers by the police, many having already returned to the Centre. Some felt that the occupation had had the further effect of jeopardizing the future of both the Unemployed Centre and the Claimants Union both of whom received provisional funding from Lothian Region. A lengthy review of the events followed, involving participants in the distribution of vouchers (from both UC and LCU). I chaired this discussion which went on for 7 hours over a number of days. The main problem in the discussion was, should the individual (identified as the groups' representative) have taken part in the occupation without consultation with others, and if so, who should these others have been. To the individual concerned the situation had called for direct action, most of the rest of those present at the Centre at the

time had not been inclined to do anything at this point except wait for the promised vouchers. However, there was no precedent either in the CU or UC for the individual to have to consult with a core group before taking action on its behalf. Indeed, it could be argued that the individual had every right to act on their own behalf, even if he was seen as a member of a 'core group' which is not strictly recognised, even by its members – in what sense could he be seen, as the Council implied, as a rep. of the Claimants Union? What was certainly true is that in the rapidly changing circumstances of those days there was no effective forum or decision making apparatus in operation – any consultation of a group of 'users' would have been fragmented and time-consuming, and even here controversy would have existed over how a decision should be made.

The discussion group wore itself out, leaving everyone to draw their own conclusions. To me events seemed to militate for a form of localised centralism; a forum sitting regularly to make decisions, and an adherence to these decisions for all those taking part. I proposed this as a future arrangement, which was rejected as unworkable. A more popular option was that if the situation arose again the UC should not be involved in distribution, while the CU should press the Council to distribute vouchers directly.

However, in many other circumstances centralism seems to prevent tactical flexibility and discussion. The Socialist Workers Party has a policy that its members will adhere to the 'party line' on policy in political discussion outside the Party. This has the considerable advantage that SWP members are united in support for particular tactics. It is important for winning arguments in union branches and so forth. The method of determining the party line is via a decision made by the Central Committee, on which each branch has a representative. The delegate is responsible to the CC to represent its position to the branches, and to the branch to explain the decision of the Central Committee. The delegate may be recalled and replaced by the branch at any time.

Branch members are responsible, (along with the paper) for conveying the party's position to the 'vanguard of the working class', arguing with 'contacts' for the party position. They are also expected to suppress any personal unease over these policies in public debates. A comrade who does not is liable to internal discipline. There are two rather damning aspects to this policy to someone like me who has been a 'contact'. Firstly, the complete about turns on tactics which suddenly occur when the CC reverses a decision – for example during the Miners Strike the SWP switched from a policy of only being active on picket lines to one of whole-hearted involvement in support groups, in response to a CC reversal of policy indicating that the strike was a 'defensive' one. Obviously the arguments of friends with-



in the SWP also suddenly reversed. This appeared highly devious – until I understood that the conversations I had been having were not simply an exchange of views, but a highly regulated procedure in which the individual member suppresses personal embarrassment for the Party's sake. It was rather like being friends with a government spokesperson.

The other problem is that the needs of the Party can look completely different on the ground from how they do to the Central Committee. Take the example of the Doomsday Scenario debate just after the 1987 election. Activists had noticed an increasing level of political interest among contacts and the beginning of politicisation on the (in my view) erroneous basis that Scotland is a country with a socialist majority governed by an external regime. The activists saw this as a fertile ground for arguments about how to achieve socialism (in this case based on the notion that it exposes nationalism as a first step). The position of the Central Committee was initially that support for nationalist measures has no place in the party's politics ('Neither Washington nor Moscow but International Socialism') and that the recognition of separate regional issues would weaken the Party as an organisation. Some members argued that support for the Assembly was anti-Tory and broadly working-class, and an ideal point on which to attack Labour reformism. The SWP during this internal debate stayed out of the lists agitating for an Assembly, despite the local opportunities for an independent profile that it offered. Until the issue was fully resolved in Central Committee the discussion remained an internal one – the public position of all Party members was that the Assembly offered nothing to the working class, and that was that.

Early in September 1987, agitation from Scottish branches and the opportunity of the Festival For Scottish Democracy, encouraged the Central Committee to reverse their position. It was an ideal opportunity to expose the dilatory Labour Party and the 'classless popular front' nonsense of the STUC and CPGB. Glasgow and Edinburgh were bombarded with placards and pamphlets to this effect in a whirlwind campaign. However in the 3 months between the election (and the birth of the Doomsday Scenario) and the centralised decision, SWP members had been unable to raise support for their position in discussions with potentially sympathetic and briefly 'politicised' contacts. In Socialist Worker-ese 'an opportunity had been lost'. All methods of social organisation select from and therefore exclude possibilities. I do not believe there is a 'correct' solution. Centralism and structurelessness are both formal and partial responses to complex situations. Their use, or more commonly their invocation to sanction 'incorrect' behaviour within the group are attempts to use past experience to direct how the group should develop. The need for them is to summarize how we might do things. Their value should always be condition-

al on the particular tactical circumstances. No critique I have read allows for the fact that there may not be a theory which can be universally applied.

Charles Handy has attempted to develop a 'typology for voluntary organisations and charities on the basis of *function*.' He suggests that the strategies to be employed for each type of 'volorg' should recognise the differing primary function of each group: self-help, service and campaigning. However, he admits that such clarity is rarely possible in reality. For a radical group which usually serves a multiplicity of functions it will be even more difficult to do this. In choosing the way in which you organise, you are also choosing the activities in which you will be effective. Centralism may be valuable in situations where the group is involved in risk, where large decisions of strategy must be made, and collective consideration is needed to weigh those risks against their consequences. Similarly when the group's members are putting it at risk, they must gain its support. Independence or autonomy is desirable in local problems and in areas where the expertise in the situation lies in particular key members who must be comfortable with their roles. To borrow Handy's categories: 'campaigning' militates for centralism and 'self-help' for independence. Ideas of recognised formal elites (as opposed to elitism) and structural democracy are of course abstractions. They are brittle inelastic things, which don't fit the range of interactions between a group of people. On the contrary these interactions must be fitted to them. The problem is to recognise both the need for and the limitations of our forms of organisation. This is where Handy's typologies may be useful. A critique of something like centralism would then cease to be polemical and become, instead, tactical and practical. Similarly the criticism of aberrant behaviour has a consistent basis as a violation of the agreed tactics or principles of the group in a particular situation.

### We'd like to be unhappy but we never do have the time

It must be part of an organisation's responsibility to determine its own criteria of effectiveness and this discussion must obviously involve as many of the group's members as necessary. The organisation's members need to be clear both about what their organisation's external purposes are... and how these are going to be achieved (staging a demonstration, starting a newsletter). This of course will involve further calculations about whether the group has the resources (money, time, skill etc) necessary to achieve the objectives and about what the internal consequences of using these methods (arrest, exhaustion, bankruptcy?) will be for the organisation.

from *What A Way to Run A Railroad* (London, 1986)

This comes from a critique of radical groupings by people with experience in co-ops and voluntary organisations. It argues that many of



the forms which have been associated with 'business' – financial planning, market research, departments, hierarchies, – are, in fact, not only adaptable to left-wing groups but necessary 'in any complex organisation'. In their view, left groups have chosen to react against capitalism by abandoning the advantage of its original discoveries, in effect ensuring that the 'collective' models they have developed are handicapped, and fail (more regularly than is necessary).

I disagree with much of this.

1. There is nothing radical in producing and selling 'radical materials'. What may be radical is the production method – whether co-ops, workers' control or voluntarism.
2. Causes of radical failure are mainly external to the project – an unsympathetic public, the strength of hegemonic ideas, lack of funds.
3. The advantages of capitalist enterprise are mainly that they have developed with capitalism – they can rely on the social coercion of waged labour. Any left project must aim to develop beyond this.

Some useful criticisms remain. One is the contrast between the amounts of effort spent by 'capitalists' and 'radicals' in defining programmes and assessing achievement. There *are* reasons why, for radical groups, task definition and assessment are difficult to achieve. Assessment frequently requires criticism which demoralizes people, and may cause them to leave the group. Definition of what is attainable is a skilled business, usually reliant on experience. Radical groups are, understandably, reluctant to 'leave it to the hacks'. In addition, the timetables of campaigning groups rarely allow a period of contemplation. They grow as oppositional groups – the external problem is already there and the more time spent in planning the more menacing it becomes. However most such campaigns end in failure, and in dissolution – often disillusionment too. What happens is that people make their own decisions about when the campaign becomes 'unrealistic' – demands more of their time than the results can justify. They then leave the campaign. There is always a group remaining who have not yet reached this jumping-off point. Unless a large number leaves together this group will always represent the majority position. This makes being open about leaving very difficult – it also often appears to be an attack on those remaining and their morale. So more usually people 'sneak off' – they stop coming to meetings and supporting activities. I have often done this myself. Sometimes I intend to come back, but the bad feeling about letting people down usually makes it easier to stay away.

As the group shrinks, the demands on the remaining members increase. Pressure of work reduces their ability to innovate, to initiate, to recruit. Mental fatigue and exhaustion follow, often coupled with reluctance to support new ideas for fear of increasing their own personal workloads. Most activists know this feeling of burnout. It can be

a serious personal problem (almost like an occupational illness). I know of cases where it has caused depression, breakdowns, alcoholism and a whole series of psychosomatic complaints. At an organisational level it greatly hinders communication and discussion within the group. The victim is left unwilling or unable to take part in such activity again and whatever abilities they may have gained are lost to the group.

The link between burnout and lack of planning seems clear enough. The phenomenon is, after all a result of voluntary and progressive over-exploitation, caused by a group setting out for goals which it does not have the resources to reach, and trying to make up the shortfall by perpetually increasing its commitment rather than reassessing its target. To avoid burnout we need to assess our efficacy. How many of us are there? How much time can we commit to the organisation? What skills and facilities do we have available? What circumstances are foreseeable to increase or decrease our numbers? Only after these questions are discussed can we decide what to do.

Often decisions are made in meetings where most members are silent – their implied consent to the activity is only contradicted in their execution of the task, when it becomes apparent that there is not, after all, going to be sufficient labour power to complete it. This is one of the most common ways in which burnout occurs.

If we undertake exercises in which all members rank possible activities for the group in order of preference, and couple this to an estimate of how much time people can give to the group, and the time needed for particular tasks, we can estimate what we are able to do and plan accordingly. A further advantage of this is that all members will get an idea of the commitment required for particular activities, and gauge their own ability to participate. There will still tend to be overwork as long as we are considering volunteers who will have other unexpected priorities – and no sanction to prevent them from attending to them. However we will have instituted some form of mutual commitment, and planning. The follow-up to this must be a full post-mortem. If we ensure a space is available where this can be done collectively – where each member participates – possibly through everyone making an initial uninterrupted statement – and the conclusion that follows reasserts a collective purpose. Contrast this with the 'sneaking off' I described above and the doubts over the value of such activity (wasting time, lowering morale) seem trivial. By using the review to assess our abilities, we also acquire an effective functionalism which should encourage involvement from those who are not entirely convinced about the strengths of collectivity – those who might otherwise be sympathetic but are unable to connect with the idealist. For example, although claimants rights are most directly attacked by the new Social Security Act, the experiences of Claimants



Union activists within campaigns against such legislation have led us to the conclusion that we should merely circulate information on the Act, and concentrate our efforts on the positions at which the Act and its ideology are experienced by the claimant, in their contacts with the DSS and DOE.

Some form of recorded group history is another simple idea which would aid both in planning and at the same time in the deciphering of the group by a new member. The history of a campaign is very powerful within the group, but left untold can lead to the mythologizing of tradition. A minutes book, or record of decisions would show what options the group has included or excluded in the past, and how the current participants might view possible activities in the future.

The plan, the review and organisational histories are tools available to any organisation. Left wing groups are usually unable to use them – either through ideological resistance, pressure of time or unfamiliarity. The resistance is understandable. It is a resistance to having a group dominated by the past – by theory and party hacks.

Unfortunately the practical expression of this is purely negative. The concern not to be something may mask the fact that you are nothing. It can also be used tactically, as an arbiter to prevent the assessments which are going on anyway taking place formally and openly. Frequently it is a decision which is taken on the basis of ideology and not of tactics. The ducking out of forward planning means that the strength of rhetoric decides where your group bounds off to next. Ultimately this is much more damaging than making use of organisational methods.

*'When you walk through the storm hold your head up high, And don't be afraid of the dark.'*

1988. Radical groups are minority groups. They have grown only through the development of bureaucracies and passive memberships, at the cost of losing their radical edge – decision through community. In such movements the 'moment of danger' is usually a moment of confusion and hopelessness. The bureaucracy and the passive membership are out of step, fixed into different understandings of what the group is – of who initiates policy and makes decisions. A ripple of motivation ebbs and flows through the group looking for an effective focus for activity. Distrust, authority and delegation are problems which follow in its wake. This could be a description of the Labour Party, the trade union, CND, any national campaign I have taken part in. The problem for those of us who have reacted against such organisations is to develop our initiatives beyond debate to sustainable practical activity. It is not that there is no sympathy for the anti-authoritarian, decentralised politics we have developed – nor that

such analyses are incomprehensible to ordinary people. But the actions implied by such beliefs – at work, in a family, amongst friends – lead to individual disadvantage for most of us, in the world in which we, for the time being, must live.

For example, spending free time in voluntary labour for a political group is hard to assess in terms of personal satisfaction. While there is often a tension between what people are forced to do and what they feel they should do, this is more usually expressed in a personal moral code, than in participation in a movement for change. People are certainly not prepared for the different set of problems involved in constructing movements for change, and how, often, morality is cast aside by tactical considerations – in recruitment, in propaganda, in pre-emptive activities. Left groups are therefore regarded as unworldly and idealistic, or manipulative and therefore sinister. Despite this, elements of the 'moral consciousness' of the left are shared by many people.

How do we break through? In my experiences potential exists at the points where people are forced into activity in protection of what they perceive as basic rights. For the unemployed this is the increasingly intrusive counselling and checking of the UBS and DSS. The Claimants Union distribute advice leaflets on the Restart and ET programmes (compulsory careers interviews, directing unemployed people to low paid work) and the new UBS Availability for Work tests (designed to discourage those with families or other commitments from signing on). We harass snooper squads in the area, we accompany people to interviews with Restart officials, 'Claimants Advisers' and their ilk.

Although we have become known and trusted as advisers, little progress has been made in encouraging others to get involved. Advice and leaflet production are seen as skilled and mysterious activities. Most people expect us to be paid to do them. I now think there may be two preconditions necessary for participation in a group such as ours. One is the moral consciousness (*'It's not right'*) mentioned above. The other is an understanding of the need for activism (*'We must do something about it'*). The fundamentals are not simply empathy with the aims of our activities but also with the methods we adopt. Where do we look for such people?

In 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' Jo Freeman described an unstructured group (i.e. no officers, collective responsibility) as one which does not abolish hierarchy but instead develops an informal one – an 'elite', usually a group of friends. These friendship bonds tend to provide the group with a certain amount of stability. Most groups have elites as their basis. If they are meeting regularly for political or social purposes (in a regulated way) then they fulfill most of the preconditions for participation I mentioned earlier. They might



therefore be an ideal recruiting area. However they are not likely to be prepared to sacrifice their own activities in the creation of a larger more nebulous structure which they may not fully support. What they may be interested in are exchanges of access or information, and this may be an effective way to draw potential contacts into both groups as well as broadening the sustaining network of activism and organisational culture.

Large organisations, whether centralist or structureless, tend to allow the more voluble and demagogic to rise to positions of influence. Local accountability and control appear to me to be the most effective ways of curbing this. If groups are based around friendship networks they are also based around experiences of each others personalities and methods. A federalist approach could allow such analyses of radical groups to be combined with some of the organisational advantages of centralist network.

Federalism, in theory at least, overcomes some of the problems of the centralism versus structurelessness debate I looked at earlier. Neither form is dominant – both are available and we can switch from one to the other, indeed by choosing where we locate our energies we do so without making a formal choice. This format also serves to strengthen the elite groups, by supplying them with a context rather than undermining them.

Such solutions fulfil two conditions which are important to radicalism – those of sustaining active participation and of insisting on the primacy of locally based activity. Nurturing and sustenance are not terms often used in connection with the Left and this is an error on our part.

I have compared my own experience in radical groups with such theories of left and radical organisations as have been available, and found the latter wanting in two main areas. Firstly, in recognition of the limited practical achievements, the group can aim for, and in consequence the tactical routes it must follow – nurture rather than struggle must be the priority. This is covered fairly extensively in the rest of the article. A second blindspot, which I wish to say a little more about, is the failure to look upon the left group as a social formation. The radical group like any other social formation has a need to make decisions, regulate diverse interests and mediate between its members – because it has a common task to achieve, which requires continuing participation from all its members. The social formation must construct a regulatory forum. This forum is essentially formal – in it the groups members move as actors, they may lobby, misrepresent and abuse. Outside the forum they abide by the decisions taken whether as a result of custom or sanction. The success of the forum ensures the development (if not the direction) of the social formation.

The Leninist party has developed such a forum and consequent formation, the business organisation has another. Our groups have succeeded in recognising radicalism as an internal as well as an external impetus, and have questioned such structures. However the advantages of particular formats such as the Leninist party or the business organisation are the consistency they can achieve in regulation and participation from their membership – they are essentially a means to an end. Criticism tends to be focussed on their 'un-natural'; or oppressive tendencies. A more useful form of criticism might be to understand the mechanisms whereby such organisations actually achieve something. What we criticise as unnatural is a mechanism of social formation. Nevertheless, without it, its functions must still be performed. Such a task requires experimentation (implying possible failure) and time. However, it is a genuinely subversive and revolutionary project: to harness creativity for achievable targets.<sup>7</sup>

Long old roads rather than the hour that dawn. . .

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7. For example, some useful ideas on group dynamics are to be found in Catherine McFarlane and Scott Sinclair's *A Sense of School! – Active Learning Approaches to In-Service* (DEC, 1986).

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## OBITUARY

### WILLIAM C McDOUGAL

William C. McDougall died on 21 June 1981, after close to 70 years' dedication to the Cause of libertarian and non-sectarian socialism.

Willie was born on 22 January 1894, in Partick, Glasgow. When about 20 he joined the Glasgow anarchists and served as secretary to the Glasgow Anarchist Group. Though a small group, the Glasgow Anarchists held Sunday meetings at the foot of Buchanan Street and were part of a burgeoning network of anarchist groups bringing the message of anarchism to the workers.

Fortunately a photograph of the Glasgow Anarchists, taken in the *Herald League* rooms on George Street on 1 January 1915, survives. It shows a group of some 15 or so determined-looking men, women and children. Hanging on the walls is a giant poster of a Will Dyson cartoon and another proclaiming that 'The great are only great because we are on our knees. Let us rise'. No trace of Walter Crane sentimentality here! Standing at the back of the group is the 20-year-old William McDougall, as determined as the rest and at the start of over 60 years' dedicated service to the cause of non-authoritarian socialism.

The First World War was a difficult time for anarchist propaganda. Prior to the war the Glasgow anarchists had little police interference with meetings, but when the war broke out they were abused and interrupted by stooges from various patriotic bodies. Willie recalled a meeting in the Botanic Gardens where, when he proclaimed the king a parasite, the platform was rushed and threats were made to dump him in the nearby Kelvin River.

Apart from this there was the constant threat of being arrested for refusing the call-up. Willie was arrested in 1916 and, after being beaten up by the local police, was handed over to the Army. Refusing to acknowledge military orders, he was put on trial and sentenced to two years, which he initially served at Wormwood Scrubs, then at Denton Camp near Brighton, and finally at Dartmoor. At Dartmoor he tried to organise a strike in support of a victimised man, but got little support. Eventually, with the encouragement of comrades, he decided to go on the run back to Glasgow. Cycling part of the way (to Plymouth and from Wakefield to Glasgow) he successfully eluded arrest and resumed his activity as anarchist propagandist in Glasgow. This included his economics classes in the *Herald League* rooms (using 20" x 30" 'Crown' size paper to illustrate his lessons, like Tressell), and speaking at numerous open-air meetings. The period after the First World War vibrated with activity. A great fillip had been given to the movement by the success of the October Revolution in Russia, and Willie and other Glasgow anarchists had welcomed it as a triumph for revolutionary, anti-parliamentary socialism. Some idea of Willie's activity as a *Spur* missionary at this time can be gauged by an advertisement in the November 1919 *Spur* detailing his open-air meetings for December 1919 and January 1920. These included a meeting at Kirk-



